

Cincinnati Disturbances Threaten 'Garden Plot'

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On April 9, Cincinnati police officer Steven Roach shot and killed an unarmed 19-year-old black youth, Timothy Thomas. The incident triggered three days of the worst urban violence since the 1993 Los Angeles riots that followed the videotaped police beating of Rodney King. The Cincinnati shooting, which bears a striking similarity to the Feb. 4, 1999 New York City police killing of Amadou Diallo, raises anew the issue of what Lyndon LaRouche has labelled "the New Violence."

One crucial facet of the "New Violence" is the pattern of unwarranted police killings of unarmed African-American and other minority youth, often in a hail of bullets, as in the New York Diallo case. "Nintendo cops," trained on computer simulators, "programmed" to profile potential perpetrators on the basis of racial and other "criminal" characteristics, is a growing phenomenon. "Nintendo cops" are in many respects identical to the schoolyard shooters, who act out their violent video-game fantasies on schoolmates and teachers, as in the Columbine High School massacre of April 20, 1999, and the recent incidents at two San Diego County high schools.

Following the killing of Thomas, three nights of violence broke out in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine district, resulting in 250 arrests, scores of injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage. Mayor Charles Luken declared an overnight curfew, which as of April 20 was still partially in effect, and called in Ohio State Police to assist in restoring calm. Luken attempted to convince the Governor to call out the National Guard, made several inflammatory statements vowing to never allow Cincinnati to be turned into "another Detroit or Washington, D.C.," referred to the rioters (mostly teenagers) as "terrorists," and equated Cincinnati with Beirut at the peak of the Lebanese civil war in the 1970s and '80s. His push for the National Guard deployment followed the shooting of a police officer on April 11.

On April 14, during Thomas's funeral, police armed with riot ammunition fired on several groups of peaceful protesters, injuring a schoolteacher and two girls, ages 7 and 11. Eyewitnesses said that the police action was unprovoked.

The Thomas case provoked a strong reaction because Cincinnati has seen a rash of police killings of black youth in recent years. According to Associated Press, Thomas was the fourth black man killed by police since November 2000, and the 15th since 1995. Over the same time period, no Caucasians were shot and killed by the police.

As a result of the rioting, and the accusations of police racism, Cincinnati Public Safety Director Kent Ryan resigned from his post. Mayor Luken wrote to U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, requesting a Justice Department probe, to determine whether there were a pattern of racism inside the police department. Justice Department investigators are already on the scene.

A Pretext for Emergency Rule

This is a classic case of inviting a fox into the hen house. Ashcroft represents the most deranged element inside the Bush Administration, and is capable of using the pretext of a new "urban insurgency" to activate the long-standing "Operation Garden Plot" plan for emergency rule in the face of civil disorder.

"Operation Garden Plot" was the government's code name for its classified plans for martial law. In the early 1970s, a copy of Garden Plot was leaked to several New Left publications, and an ensuing scandal fed into Congressional hearings into illegal domestic intelligence activities by the CIA, the FBI, and the military intelligence branches.

Nevertheless, the Department of Defense Civil Disturbance Plan, "Garden Plot," is still operational. It was last revised on Feb. 15, 1991, during the Presidency of Sir George Bush. Under this 256-page domestic counterinsurgency/martial rule scheme, in the event the President declares a domestic civil emergency, the U.S. Attorney General becomes the de facto commander-in-chief of domestic military and law enforcement forces.

The idea of such rule-by-decree has been promoted by the Bush Administration since taking office. Less than a month after the inauguration, during a visit to a U.S. Army Reserve facility in West Virginia, President Bush endorsed a revamping of the National Security Council system, to create a special assistant to the President for "Homeland Defense."

In early April, representatives of a score of Federal, state, and local agencies conducted a war game response to a U.S. outbreak of hoof and mouth disease. The war-gamers concluded that the only way the United States could avoid a \$5 billion disintegration of the meat industry, was by a nationwide deployment of the military and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to slaughter the infected herds, and militarize the nation's highway system, in order to curb travel in and out of contaminated zones.

Sources in Cincinnati report that, during the violence, radicals were circulating leaflets, claiming that shut-down military bases have been turned into concentration camps, with crematoria, where African-Americans will be shipped for "final solution." While there is no doubt that these stories, like the infamous "black helicopter" tales of the Clinton era, are untrue, the reality of what the Bush Administration, and Ashcroft in particular, have in mind for many Americans is bad enough to warrant concern, and appropriate policy action.